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11. The Adiabene Onomasticon

Since we know a number of personal names used by some Adiabeneans, we can undertake an analysis of the onomastic data. Let us start with the names belonging to the royal family.

1. We have three individuals named Μονόβαζος in Greek. Those are Monobazos I, king of Adiabene and husband of Queen Helena, then their oldest son, Monobazos II who succeeded Izates on the Adiabene throne and finally a certain Monobazos, kinsmen of Monobazos II who took part in the Jewish uprising against Rome. The name Μονόβαζος, though recorded in Greek and attested both in Rabbinic literature as מונובז¹³³⁷ and in the Assur inscriptions as Manabaz¹³³⁸, is widely considered to be of Iranian origin¹³³⁹. According to Justi, its closest parallel is the Armenian Manavaz¹³⁴⁰, and its meaning, in the light of the parallels from Avesta, would be “mit Ponies fahrend” (*mana* as a pony and *wāza* as “vehens et vectus”)¹³⁴¹. Yet, *mana* as a pony is not really attested in Iranian languages¹³⁴². In turn, Marquart understands the name as “Manu-bāzu”, and compares to Τειρίβαζος / “Tīri – bāzu” (“mit einem Arm wie Tīri ausgestattet”)¹³⁴³. As a result, he suggests the following meaning of Monobazos: “mit einem Arm wie Manu ausgestattet”¹³⁴⁴. Finally, the name Monobazos has also been suggested to derive from Iranian *mana* and *vazdah*, meaning the proper name of the god (Vohu) Manah and *permanence* respectively¹³⁴⁵.

2. Another issue is the nickname Βαζαῖος used by Monobazos I¹³⁴⁶. It is also regarded as a name of Iranian provenience. It is said to come from the Iranian *bāz* meaning *falcon*¹³⁴⁷ or from *bāzā* meaning *arm*¹³⁴⁸. The closest parallel comes from the middle-Persian - Bāzag, which is also believed to be related to *bāz* (*falcon*)¹³⁴⁹.

3. Two other Adiabene kings bore the same name, namely Izates I, king of Adiabene and father of Monobazos I, as well as Izates II¹³⁵⁰. This name too is widely recognized as of Iranian

¹³³⁷ Jastrow 1975: 744.

¹³³⁸ Aggoula 1985: 34-35 (no. 12); Beyer 1998: 13 (no. 12).

¹³³⁹ Justi 1963: 189; Frenschkowski 1990: 217-218; Ilan 2002: 352.

¹³⁴⁰ Justi 1963: 189.

¹³⁴¹ Justi 1963: 518.

¹³⁴² Frenschkowski 1990: 218.

¹³⁴³ Likewise Hinz 1975: 66.

¹³⁴⁴ Marquart 1903: 287. A grammatically parallel compound can be found in the Avroman papyri: Δηρόβαζος which is interpreted as a Greek adaptation of the Iranian * Dainā-vāzah (and Daēnāuuāzah) – see Mayrhofer 1979: I/35.

¹³⁴⁵ De Jong, personal communication, 21.02.2012. For Vohu Manah, see de Jong 1997: 152-153, n. 127; for *vazdah* (e.g. in the name Ἀρτάβαζος), see Schmitt 2011: 99.

¹³⁴⁶ Tubach 1986: 13, n. 41 suggests reading Βαγαῖος in Ant. 20: 18 (instead of Βαζαῖος). This would solve the enigma of Monobazos I's nickname, since the name Βαγαῖος is well attested and corresponds to the Old Iranian * *baga-* meaning God (see Schmitt 2011: 152-153). However, in the present state of research on Josephus' manuscripts (see Niese 1890: 279) there are no grounds to make this emendation.

¹³⁴⁷ Justi 1963: 66, 488-489; Frenschkowski 1990: 217.

¹³⁴⁸ D.N. MacKenzie 1971: 18.

¹³⁴⁹ Gignoux 1986: 58 (no. 204).

¹³⁵⁰ This name appears in Greek in a funerary wall inscription from northern Jerusalem in the phrase: [βη]θ Ιζατω[ν]. The inscription is, however, extremely damaged, and as such does not allow far-reaching conclusions. Furthermore, it was discovered in the modern Shuafat region, thus some three miles north of the present Old City which makes it unlikely as a candidate for the resting place of the Adiabene royalty. For the inscription, see Abel 1913: 262-277 (esp. 271, no. 1); Klein 1920: 30, no. 84; Figueras 1983: 10, n. 61 and 15, n. 127; Cotton/Di Segni/Eck/Isaac/Misgav/Kushnir-Stein/Price/Roll/Yardeni 2011: 458-459 (no. 440).

origin¹³⁵¹. Generally speaking, scholars point to the Iranian root meaning *genius, a godly being* or just *god (yazata)*¹³⁵². Among others, this root is attested for personal names in the Middle-Persian language as *Yazdan*¹³⁵³, and in the Syriac transmission as *Īzad*¹³⁵⁴. All these forms, however, use a hypocoristic form of the root *yazata*. By contrast, de Jong has pointed out that this interpretation is problematic since no Iranian known to us has ever been called *god*. According to de Jong, the second part of the name is the Iranian word *zāta* meaning *born*, and consequently the name could be compared to the Middle Persian name *Wehzād (well-born)* and as such would fit well the context of the story about Izates' birth in Ant. 20:18-19¹³⁵⁵.

4. The female members of Adiabene royalty that are known to us by name are Queen Helena and Grapte, a relative of Monobazos II who also had her palace built in Jerusalem. Helena is of course a well-known Greek name¹³⁵⁶; Grapte in turn is a rare Greek name. The name of Grapte is attested on two inscriptions from Asia Minor and once in Christian literature, furthermore, it appears in two Jewish papyri from the Judean desert¹³⁵⁷. First, a short inscription from Tchepni, a village located in ancient Pontos, contains a female name, Meidulos Grapte alongside her husband Magas¹³⁵⁸. The inscription was found on stone in the building's foundations. Thus, the context of its creation is not clear. Second, there is a votive tablet from a sarcophagus found in Cilicia among ruins on the coastline between Korykos and Elaiussa-Sebaste. A votive inscription on it, probably addressed to a mother, contains a female name, [*G*]rapte¹³⁵⁹. The text is placed on tabula ansata. Thus, its Hellenistic cultural character is self-evident¹³⁶⁰. Finally, an early Christian text from the late 1st or 2nd c. CE entitled *Shepherd of Hermas* mentions a *Grapte (Hermes, 2.4.3)*¹³⁶¹ who probably was a deaconess in one of the Eastern Christian communities¹³⁶². Thus, *Grapte* is a rare Greek name for females, and all the above-mentioned references come either from a Hellenistic environment or a Christian-Hellenistic context. However, we also have two more attestations of that name in a Jewish context, namely, the two Greek papyri (dated ca. 120-127 CE), XHev/Se 63 and 64 uncovered in the *cave of the Letters*¹³⁶³. They tell us of Salome also called Grapte (l. 3 and l. 9; as well as pap. 64a, 3r where the form *Gropte* can be found). She appears as the mother of Salome Komaise (daughter of Levi) who was the owner of the extant archive of seven legal documents relating to commerce. The Jewish family who owned the papyri came from Mahoza, a village in the Nabataean area. The documents show that those Jews owned houses and orchards in the province of Arabia, made use of non-Jewish legal instruments and were very well integrated into the

¹³⁵¹ Barish 1983: 163 and 209 n 23 rightly remarks that this kind of approach seeks the origin of the homonym Ἰζάτης including the Greek tau. However, this consonant can be added after an open vowel when Grecizing Semitic names. Indeed, in Bell. 4:568, we find the other form of this name without *tau*: Ἰζα. If so, other etymologies based on the root זכ could come into play. Yet, the problem is that there are no good Semitic parallels for such a name.

¹³⁵² Bartholomae 1904: 1279; Justi 1963: 145-146; Frenschkowski 1990: 216.

¹³⁵³ Gignoux 2003: 68-69.

¹³⁵⁴ Gignoux/Ch.Jullien/F.Jullein 2009: 88-89.

¹³⁵⁵ De Jong 2004: 56, n. 34.

¹³⁵⁶ Ilan 2002: 317-318.

¹³⁵⁷ Bauer/K.Aland/B.Aland 1988: 331.

¹³⁵⁸ Jerphanion 1914-1924: 3-4 (no. 3).

¹³⁵⁹ Keil/Wilhelm/Herzfeld 1931: 226 (no. 794).

¹³⁶⁰ E.A. Meyer 2004: 28, n. 38. See one example in Reade 1998: 81 that comes from Mesopotamia, perhaps even from Nineveh.

¹³⁶¹ Osiek 1999: 58.

¹³⁶² Madigan/Osiek 2005: 25-26.

¹³⁶³ Cotton/Yardeni 1997: 160-161.

Nabataean environment¹³⁶⁴. Thus, the context is different than that of the Adiabenean setting, and does not allow us to suggest a common background for both families.

5. Another royal Adiabenean who, alongside Monobazos, took part in the uprising is named Kenedaios (Κενεδαῖος). The origin of this name is not clear¹³⁶⁵. Jastrow, followed by Ilan, relates it to כְּנֵדָא meaning a *gown* (or a *pitcher*, a *pot*) and considers it a Persian loanword¹³⁶⁶. However, it could also match the Nabatean כְּנֵדָא¹³⁶⁷. There are also similar names recorded in Greek in Egyptian papyri: Κένδεος¹³⁶⁸, Κανδαῖος¹³⁶⁹, Κενδέας¹³⁷⁰.

7. Four kings of Adiabene known to us by name who appear before and after the dynasty of royal converts are as follows: Abdissar[], Artaxares, Mebarsapes and ᾿Αῦιλῦ.

Ἀβδισσαρ[] (so written on the coin legends discussed by de Callatay¹³⁷¹) is clearly a Semitic name meaning *servant of Ishtar* and is transmitted in the Greek script (as ΑΒΔΙΣΑΡ in the inscription found Tell Ġāriyē, and as Μαναλας Αβδισαρου in Der‘ā in Transjordan), in the Hatra Aramaic (‘bd’šr), as well as in the Akkadian (^mAb-di-^dIššār in the Murashu Archive from Nippur)¹³⁷². In turn, the Latin form *Artaxares* comes from an old Iranian name * Rtaxšara- (the Elamite form: hh.Ir-da-ak-šá-ra, the Akkadian form: ^mAr-taḫ-šá-ri/- šá-ar), is also known in Greek as Ἀρτοξάρης, being an accurate reproduction of the Iranian original¹³⁷³. Next, the name Μηβασάπης has been suggested as having an Iranian origin, though no precise parallels have been suggested yet¹³⁷⁴. Lastly, ᾿Αῦιλῦ is clearly of Arabic origin - the name is based on the group “af ‘al” and the Arabic root is ‘aṭala (“to be of noble origin”)¹³⁷⁵.

6. The only non-royal Adiabenean who is mentioned by name by Josephus in his writings is Chagiras, son of Nabataios. This Adiabenean features highly interesting forms of personal identification, formally being quite typical of the Jewish onomasticon of that day¹³⁷⁶. First, he is identified by mention of his family identification, namely that of his father who is named Ναβαταῖος. Ναβαταῖος is related to the Biblical נְבִיחַ of Genesis 25:13 where it is used for the firstborn son of Ishmael. What is more, a ceratin אַבְיָקָא, son of נְבִיחַ or נְבִיחַי, is recalled in Rabbinic literature and according to Güdemann¹³⁷⁷, can be identified with Chagiras, son of Ναβαταῖος from Bell. 5:474 since both are praised for the exact same kind of exploit during the siege of Jerusalem. Ilan holds that the name “probably indicates Arabic ethnic provenance”¹³⁷⁸. Furthermore, he is also named Χαγείρας (so the MSS edition and Ilan, other readings include Αγίρας and Αγήρας¹³⁷⁹). This name as recorded is unknown among Greek names, but, of course, the text says between lines that this is only a transcription meaning *lame* (χωλός). Indeed, *lame* in

¹³⁶⁴ Cotton/Yardeni 1997: 160-161.

¹³⁶⁵ See a collection of references to this name in Ilan 2002: 435.

¹³⁶⁶ Jastrow 1975: 648.

¹³⁶⁷ Negev 1991: 58 (no. 1034).

¹³⁶⁸ Pape/Benseler 1959: 645.

¹³⁶⁹ Littmann/Preisigke 1922: 164.

¹³⁷⁰ Foraboschi 1967: 163.

¹³⁷¹ De Callatay 1996.

¹³⁷² Lipiński 1982: 118-119.

¹³⁷³ Schmitt 2009: 49; Schmitt 2011: 124.

¹³⁷⁴ Justi 1963: 202.

¹³⁷⁵ Caquot 1952: 101; Altheim/Stiehl 1965: 227, n. 2; Beyer 1998: 33.

¹³⁷⁶ Ilan 1992: 32-50.

¹³⁷⁷ Güdemann 1880: 132. So Ilan 1992:196 too.

¹³⁷⁸ Ilan 1992: 196

¹³⁷⁹ Thackeray 1928: 348, n. 2.

Part 3: Material and Political Environment of Adiabene from the 3rd c. BCE to the 3rd c. CE

Aramaic translates חגיר, and similarly in other Semitic languages - the Amoraic חגירא¹³⁸⁰, the Arabic חגير¹³⁸¹, the Nabatean חגירי¹³⁸², the Palmyran חגיר¹³⁸³. The case of Chagiras is very instructive, in that it counters simple labels based on clear-cut distinctions between what is indigenous and what is from the outside and, consequently, foreign. Chagiras is taken to be Jewish, but is also characterized as Adiabenean, and his father bears a name of Arabic provenance.

7. Two other individuals from Adiabene mentioned in the Talmud are Mār 'Uq̄ba from Arbela (*PT Soṭah* 4, 3 (4))¹³⁸⁴, and Jacob Hadyava (*BT Baba Batra* 26b)¹³⁸⁵. While the latter Rabbi bears a well-known Biblical name widely used among the Jews, the former's name is less typical¹³⁸⁶, and is in fact Arabic¹³⁸⁷.

8. Two personal names (in addition to 'Aṭīlū) of individuals connected with ntwn'šry' in Hatra inscriptions nos. 113 and 114 are 'Alkūd (or 'Alkūr) and 'Ustānaq. Both names are considered by Beyer to be of Iranian provenance¹³⁸⁸. There are no indications that these individuals were of royal background; however, the fact that they could afford to make dedications in Hatra suggest that they were members of the social elite of ntwn'šry'.

In conclusion, we know eighteen Adiabeneans by their personal names. Since some names are used by more than one individual, and some people bear two names, we have altogether sixteen different names. In terms of the provenance of the names, we have six Iranian names (Monobazos, Bazaïos, Izates, Artaxares, 'Alkūd (or 'Alkūr) and 'Ustānaq) used by eight individuals. Further, two names are Greek (Helene and Grapte) used by two different females. We also have six Semitic names used by six males – Abdissar[], Jacob, Chagiras, Nabataïos, Mār 'Uq̄ba, and 'Aṭīlū, three of which (Nabataïos, Mār 'Uq̄ba and 'Aṭīlū) are clearly of Arabic background. Lastly, the name Kenedaios and Mebarsapes are not clear, since they can be either of Iranian or of Semitic origin. Thus, generally speaking, we have two prominent groups of names among the Adiabeneans – Iranian and Semitic, and the third one, somewhat smaller, which has Greek elements. Interestingly, the Adiabene dynasty preferred Iranian names for males¹³⁸⁹, and Greek names for its female members. This shows that, regardless of its ethnicity, the Adiabene royalty and its elites chose to express themselves as members of the Parthian commonwealth (except for Abdissar[] and 'Aṭīlū, but this may be well explained either by a very early or late date of their appearance). Greek names clearly point to some degree of Hellenization of Adiabene elites. Lastly, the presence of Semitic names is stronger among non-royal Adiabeneans which may suggest that a considerable amount of its population, regardless of the political standing of its elites who chose to ally themselves with Parthia, were of Semitic origin.

¹³⁸⁰ Kosovsky 1984: 503.

¹³⁸¹ Harding 1971: 177.

¹³⁸² Negev 1991: 27, no. 415.

¹³⁸³ Stark 1971: 87.

¹³⁸⁴ Altheim/Stiehl 1965: 69; Oppenheimer 1983: 38-39.

¹³⁸⁵ Oppenheimer 1983: 22.

¹³⁸⁶ Ilan 2002: 171-174.

¹³⁸⁷ Altheim/Stiehl 1965: 69.

¹³⁸⁸ Beyer 1998: 54.

¹³⁸⁹ So Widengren 1960: 7 and n. 16.